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DONALD PHILIP GREEN and LISA MICHELE WAXMAN — Direct Threat and Political Tolerance

DAVID L. PROTESS and others — The Impact of Investigative Reporting

DAVID W. MOORE — Political Campaigns and the Knowledge-Gap Hypothesis

JON A. KROSNICK and DUANE F. ALWIN — A Cognitive Theory of Response-Order Effects

GEORGE F. BISHOP — The Middle Response Alternative

J. SCOTT ARMSTRONG and EDWARD J. LUSK — Return Postage in Mail Surveys

THE POLLS — Review: Public Opinion Data and the Commission on Pornography *by Tom W. Smith*

Report: Employment and Social Welfare *by Robert Y. Shapiro and others*

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## ERRATUM

Table 2 in Kent Tedin, "Change and Stability in Presidential Popularity at the Individual Level" (POQ, Winter 1986) contains several errors in the count of the response permutations. Professor Tedin will provide a corrected table upon request to him at the Department of Political Science, University of Houston, 4800 Calhoun Road, Houston, TX 77004.

# THE IMPACT OF INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING ON PUBLIC OPINION AND POLICYMAKING
## TARGETING TOXIC WASTE

DAVID L. PROTESS, FAY LOMAX COOK, THOMAS R. CURTIN, MARGARET T. GORDON, DONNA R. LEFF, MAXWELL E. McCOMBS, AND PETER MILLER

**Abstract** This article reports the fourth in a continuing series of case studies that explore the impact of news media investigative journalism on the general public, policymakers, and public policy. The media disclosures in this field experiment had limited effects on the general public but were influential in changing the attitudes of policymakers. The study describes how changes in public policymaking resulted from collaboration between journalists and government officials. The authors develop a model that is a beginning step toward specifying the conditions under which media investigations influence public attitudes and agendas.

This article reports the fourth in a series of field experiments that test the agenda-setting hypothesis (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) for news media investigative reports.[1] Our goal is to treat these field experiments as case studies from which we can develop empirically grounded theory that specifies the conditions under which investigative reports influence public agendas and policymaking priorities. Unique to stud-

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1. The studies are being conducted by an interdisciplinary team at the Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University.

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ies of agenda-setting is our use of pretest–posttest research designs, made possible by journalists' disclosure of forthcoming investigative stories to the research team with adequate time for pre- and postpublication survey interviewing. A further distinctive feature is our concern with detailed tracing of the life course of a media report from an examination of the initial investigation by journalists, to the publication of the report, the effects on the general public and policymakers, and eventual policy outcomes.

The first of these studies (Cook et al., 1983) found that a nationally televised investigative news report on fraud and abuse in the federally funded home health care program had significant effects on the agendas of both the public and policymakers. The study found that home health care–related issues (and not unrelated issues) became significantly more important to citizens and policymakers exposed to the televised report than to nonviewers. Yet, actual policy changes after the report's publication resulted more from direct pressure for change by the journalists themselves than from demands by the general public or political constituencies.

The second study (Protess et al., 1985) measured the impact of a Chicago *Sun–Times* investigative series disclosing government improprieties in the reporting and handling of rape against Chicago area women. The effects of the newspaper series were considerably more limited than in the first study, in part because the pretest disclosed an already high level of awareness and concern about the problem. The most striking result was a sharp increase in the number, length, and prominence of stories about rape in the *Sun–Times*—that is, the largest measurable effect was on the medium itself rather than on its audience. However, as in the home health care study, policymaking effects included legislative hearings and related "symbolic" political actions (Edelman, 1964).[2]

The effects of the third investigative report, a five-part local television series about repeatedly brutal Chicago police officers, provided an "in-between" case (Leff, Protess, and Brooks, 1986). The series had significant effects on viewer attitudes about police brutality but not on their assessment of the priority or salience of the problem in comparison with other social concerns. Nonetheless, the series resulted in

2. Symbolic acts have been described as "dramatic in outline and empty of realistic detail" (Edelman, 1964:9). Here we use the term to describe policy "changes" that are largely rhetorical. Thus, when a public official responds to a media exposé by making speeches about the problem, by convening governmental hearings, or by announcing as news previously approved legislation, we call these acts symbolic. Conversely, "substantive" reforms are tangible regulatory, legislative, or administrative changes that occur after an investigative story is published. In making this distinction, we do not mean to suggest that substantive reforms are necessarily more likely than symbolic reforms to lead in the long run to the *correction* of the problem disclosed by the media.

major policy changes within the Chicago Police Department, in part because its publication coincided with a hotly contested Chicago mayoral election in which mayoral challenger Harold Washington used the series to help make the Department an issue.

Why is it that some investigative reports "catch on" and affect the views of members of the public and policy elites, while others do not? Why is it that all three investigative reports had some form of policy impact, despite the fact that they did not all have effects on the public and policymakers? In answer to the first question, several explanations have tentatively been suggested in our earlier work: the nature of the medium of presentation (print versus television); the style of presentation (unambiguous, with clear villains and heroes, versus ambiguous, where fault is not clear and where solutions seem difficult to find); the "age" of the issue on the media's agenda (a new issue that has infrequently been presented in the past and about which the public has little knowledge versus an old issue that has recurred over time on the media's agenda and about which the public is aware).

None of these explanations provides a possible answer to the second question concerning the investigative reports' impact on policy. Regardless of the above factors, some form of policy impact occurred in all the cases we have examined to date. In the home health care and rape cases, the impact was symbolic with legislative hearings and proposals for policy changes. In the police brutality case, the impact was substantive with actual, major policy changes occurring. Clearly, more case studies are needed before we can develop an empirically grounded theory that specifies under what conditions and with what kinds of issues media investigations influence public agendas and policymaking processes.

The current study examines the public opinion and policymaking impact of a local television investigative series concerning the toxic waste disposal practices of a major Chicago university. In this case, the publication format was virtually identical to the earlier police brutality study: a multipart television report, aired during a "ratings sweeps" period, by the same correspondent on the same local television station. Further, one of the primary "targets" of the series was also a city regulatory agency, the Chicago Fire Department, which was accused of failing to enforce its environmental safety regulations. However, here we examine a different kind of issue—i.e., toxic waste disposal—at a different point in the city's political history—i.e., a year into Mayor Harold Washington's first term, when he was locked in a struggle with the City Council over control of Chicago's city government.

This article first will discuss the attitudinal impact of the toxic waste series on the general public and policy elites. Next, we trace the effects of the series on public policymaking in Chicago, focusing on the Fire

Department's response to disclosures about its shortcomings. Finally, we analyze the findings of the four studies and try to identify and explain emerging patterns.

## Research Design

The pretest, posttest experimental design is highly appropriate, but not traditionally utilized, in research involving nonlaboratory studies of media effects (Cook and Campbell, 1979). More typical in such research endeavors is the use of cross-sectional (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; McLeod, Becker, and Byrnes, 1974; Erbring, Goldenberg, and Miller, 1980) or panel study designs (Tipton, Haney, and Baseheart, 1975; Shaw and McCombs, 1977; MacKuen, 1981). In this study, however, two factors made field experimentation practicable: the reporters' cooperation with researchers and the lengthy preparation time of the report, which made advance planning by the researchers possible. Thus, researchers were able to obtain prepublication measurements of public and policymaker attitudes about the precise subject matter of the forthcoming television series. Survey questions about unrelated matters were used to obtain control data.

The resulting television series, "Wasted Time," was broadcast on three successive nights beginning 13 May 1984 on WMAQ-TV, Channel 5, a Chicago-based station owned and operated by the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). The reporter was Peter Karl, a well-known local investigative journalist who also served as correspondent on the police brutality series that was the subject of our third study. The series was promoted heavily by the television station, since it was broadcast in the middle of a highly important ratings period.

The series disclosed that the University of Chicago was storing potentially hazardous toxic chemical and radioactive wastes beneath several of its buildings, including some classrooms. Stories alleged that the storage violated Chicago Fire Department regulations, as well as the environmental standards of several state and federal agencies, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the U.S. Department of Energy. Each night, the broadcast described an assortment of delays by the University in constructing relatively inexpensive facilities to ameliorate the waste disposal problem, thus giving the investigative report its title "Wasted Time." At no time did the series state that anyone at the University was in immediate danger, but the use of pictures of chemical explosions and fires that had occurred on the campus a decade earlier suggested the potential harm involved. One implication of the series was that the violations would not have

persisted over time if certain federal, state, and local agencies were doing their jobs properly (i.e., the EPA, OSHA, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the Chicago Fire Department).

### GENERAL PUBLIC

Through random-digit dialing techniques, 395 respondents from the Chicago Metropolitan area were contacted two weeks before the television series aired. Telephone numbers were generated from listings in area directories. The last digit of each chosen number was replaced with a random digit to ensure that unlisted telephone numbers were included in the sample. Those who refused to be interviewed were found to be similar to respondents in gender, age, education, and the area of residence.

The telephone sample was then stratified by the respondents' self-reported television viewing habits into regular watchers of Channel 5 news ($N = 208$), and watchers of other evening newscasts or non-watchers of any television news ($N = 186$). We expected that Channel 5 newswatchers were likely to be exposed to the investigative series, while others would constitute a quasi-experimental comparison group. One week after the broadcast of the series, researchers recontacted the entire sample. As indicated in Table 1, 235 persons agreed to be reinterviewed, comprising the general public sample in this study. The respondents in this sample, though proportionately more female than the pretest respondents, did not differ significantly in educational level, age, or ethnic or racial background from the individuals who refused to be reinterviewed or who could not be recontacted after the pretest.[3]

Since general viewing habits are not perfect predictors of the public's actual *exposure* to a specific television series, respondents were asked at the conclusion of the posttest interview whether they had "seen, read, or heard anything about recent news media investigative stories about toxic waste disposal problems at the University of Chicago." Follow-up questions were then asked about the source and extent of the exposure. Those responding "yes" to the question were considered "series-aware" group members, while those responding

3. Of respondents interviewed for the pretest, 59% were female, while 64.7% of the posttest respondents were female. The change in gender corresponds to a chi-square value of 7.2035 with one degree of freedom ($p < .01$) after completing the Yates correction for the continuity of the data. No other demographic changes between pre- and posttest were statistically significant. Moreover, no significant demographic differences were found between the Channel 5 viewers and nonviewers (identified in Table 2). The percentage of respondents who agreed to be reinterviewed (60%) was slightly higher than in two of our previous three studies. Nonetheless, the attrition rate was still fairly substantial, due in large measure to the problem of keeping respondents in panels in which they are given no inducements to participate.

**Table 1.** Quasi-Experimental Design Distribution of Respondents

| Respondent Groupings | Pretest | Posttest |
|---|---|---|
| TV 5 Watchers/Nonwatchers | | |
| Treatment (watchers) | 208 ( 52.7%) | 131 ( 55.7%) |
| Comparison (nonwatchers) | 186 ( 47.0%) | 103 ( 43.9%) |
| Unclassified | 1 ( 0.3%) | 1 ( 0.4%) |
| TOTAL | 395 (100.0%) | 235 (100.0%) |
| Series Aware/Nonaware | | |
| Treatment (series-aware) | NA | 83 ( 35.3%) |
| Comparison (series-unaware) | NA | 146 ( 62.2%) |
| Unclassified | NA | 6 ( 2.5%) |
| TOTAL | NA | 235 (100.0%) |

"no" were defined as a comparison group. Respondents in these two groups did not differ significantly in gender, educational level, age, or ethnic or racial background. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents in this analysis. It is important to emphasize that respondents in both analyses are from the same overall sample. It is only the definition of "treatment" and "control" that changes.

To avoid sensitizing respondents to the subject of the investigative series, researchers embedded questions related to toxic waste disposal and other environmental problems among questions about crime, unemployment, police brutality, child abuse, and governmental corruption. Of the forty separate items in the questionnaire, twelve were related to general environmental issues and six to chemical or radioactive waste disposal problems. We hypothesized that change would occur among the Channel 5 viewers on questions about the environment and toxic waste, while responses to other questions would remain constant from pre- to posttest. We expected the comparison groups' responses to remain constant on all questions.

The questions can be divided into three categories: (1) attitudes and agendas, (2) affective responses, and (3) changes in behavior. We asked respondents to rate the importance of environmental issues compared to other problems; to evaluate the performance of federal, state, and local governmental agencies, including some related and others unrelated to the environment; to describe their level of anxiety about various environmental problems and their personal reactions to news stories about them; and to discuss what they have done to avoid environmental hazards. We hypothesized that in posttest interviews, the treatment groups would consider toxic waste and related environmen-

tal problems to be more important and would change their attitudes, feelings, and actions about them.

### POLICYMAKERS AND POLICYMAKING

A purposive sample of forty policy elites was selected for their interest and potential influence on environmental policymaking. Those surveyed included public administrators from Illinois and federal environmental protection agencies, state legislators, members of the Chicago City Council, University officials, and lobbyists from public interest groups and private waste disposal companies. Persons who were considered likely to know about the investigative series prior to pretest interviewing were excluded from the sample. Interviews were conducted by telephone; 31 of the 40 respondents were reinterviewed after the television broadcast.

As in our previous studies, we made no attempt to establish a group of nonexposed elite respondents. We expected that persons with significant interest in the subject of an investigative report would almost certainly hear about it, even if they failed to view the particular stories. Indeed, 23 of the 31 respondents indicated in posttest interviews that they "saw, read, or heard" something about the series. Statistical analyses were performed on the self-defined "exposed" and "unexposed" groups.

The policymakers were asked a series of questions that were identical to those in the survey of the general public. The questions included items both related and unrelated to the subject of the investigative series. In addition, the elite respondents were asked about their past, present, and anticipated future policymaking activities related to toxic waste disposal problems.

After the series, researchers tracked policy developments that might be attributable to the Channel 5 investigation by interviewing an expanded sample of policymakers and conducting analyses of related budgets, legislation, and regulatory and administrative initiatives. Content analyses of local media coverage of environmental issues were also performed both as an additional indicator of the level of governmental response to the series and as a measure of its impact on the news media's agendas.

## Impact of the Investigative Report on the General Public

In examining public attitudes before and after the broadcast of the Channel 5 investigation, we wanted to determine whether changes occurred on questionnaire items related to the subject of the series. To

test whether the changes between the pretest and posttest were different for the exposed group from the nonexposed group, we used analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), employing the pretest score as the covariate. Table 2 shows the mean responses and significance levels for Channel 5 viewers and nonviewers as well as for the series-aware and unaware groups.

The data show no effects of the series, as measured by the ANCOVA analysis. Some items bordered on significant change, however, giving slight indications of change in perception due to the series. In particular, compared to those unaware of the series, those exposed to the reports were slightly more likely to say that environmental news stories cause confusion. Both series-aware and unaware respondents reported worrying somewhat less about improper storage and disposal of chemical waste at the posttest. Both groups of respondents tended to decrease their evaluation of the Chicago Fire Department, which suggests that other stimuli produced a small judgmental change. Evaluation of environmental agencies other than the Fire Department remained constant, as did measures of respondents' behavior concerning environmental problems.

In short, the agenda-setting hypothesis was not supported by the findings. Responses to questions about the importance of toxic waste disposal in relation to other issues did not change significantly. In comparison with other problems, toxic chemical and radioactive waste disposal was consistently at or near the bottom of their reported agendas.

## Impact of the Investigative Report on Policymakers and Policymaking

Table 3 reports the mean responses of policymakers to the surveys before and after the investigative report. The small size of the nonexposed group and the nonprobability sampling procedure make generalization from these data tentative. Recognizing the limitations of inference from these data, we believe that the findings in Table 3 indicate stronger support for the hypotheses than do the survey results for the general public.

Policy elites were asked to evaluate the performance of eleven government agencies. We expected that the investigative report would result in policy elites' lowering their assessments of the jobs done by four agencies—the Chicago Fire Department, the U.S. Department of Energy, the EPA, and OSHA. The changes were statistically significant ($p < .05$) for the performance evaluations of three of the four government agencies targeted by Channel 5 as bearing responsibility

**Table 2.** Mean Responses for General Public[a]

| | Channel 5 Viewers ($N$ = 131) | | Channel 5 Nonviewers ($N$ = 103) | | | Series-Aware ($N$ = 83) | | Not Aware ($N$ = 146) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre | Post | Pre | Post | Sig.[b] | Pre | Post | Pre | Post | Sig.[b] |
| Cognitive Items | | | | | | | | | | |
| Importance of toxic waste disposal | 3.48 | 3.43 | 3.53 | 3.41 | ns | 3.51 | 3.42 | 3.50 | 3.42 | ns |
| Fire Dept. does its job | 3.67 | 3.52 | 3.67 | 3.53 | ns | 3.69 | 3.50 | 3.68 | 3.55 | ns |
| U.S. Dept. of Energy does its job | 2.66 | 2.72 | 2.40 | 2.53 | ns | 2.48 | 2.58 | 2.57 | 2.64 | ns |
| U.S. EPA does its job | 2.61 | 2.57 | 2.41 | 2.56 | ns | 2.45 | 2.39 | 2.55 | 2.65 | ns |
| OSHA does its job | 2.63 | 2.76 | 2.52 | 2.75 | ns | 2.48 | 2.65 | 2.63 | 2.80 | ns |
| NRC does its job | 2.56 | 2.61 | 2.22 | 2.37 | ns | 2.35 | 2.37 | 2.46 | 2.59 | ns |
| Fed. officials adequately enforce toxic waste disposal regulations | 2.50 | 2.48 | 2.41 | 2.42 | ns | 2.49 | 2.43 | 2.44 | 2.43 | ns |
| Fire officials regularly inspect buildings for hazards | 2.44 | 2.55 | 2.48 | 2.63 | ns | 2.43 | 2.57 | 2.47 | 2.59 | ns |
| Local universities have influence in the city | 2.47 | 2.55 | 2.58 | 2.64 | ns | 2.39 | 2.44 | 2.62 | 2.68 | ns |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Affective Items | | | | | | | | | | |
| Worry of improper storage and disposal of chemical waste | 3.36 | 3.23 | 3.27 | 3.13 | ns | 3.44 | 3.21 | 3.27 | 3.17 | ns |
| Worry of danger from radioactive accidents | 3.13 | 3.03 | 3.12 | 2.96 | ns | 3.12 | 3.04 | 3.15 | 3.00 | ns |
| News stories frustrate me | 1.77 | 1.73 | 1.73 | 1.72 | ns | 1.74 | 1.76 | 1.76 | 1.69 | ns |
| News stories confuse me | 1.54 | 1.60 | 1.58 | 1.59 | ns | 1.57 | 1.69 | 1.56 | 1.56 | ns |
| News stories make me feel helpless | 1.61 | 1.70 | 1.63 | 1.68 | ns | 1.67 | 1.78 | 1.59 | 1.65 | ns |
| News stories anger me | 1.74 | 1.73 | 1.75 | 1.75 | ns | 1.78 | 1.77 | 1.73 | 1.74 | ns |
| News stories make me feel indifferent | 1.29 | 1.32 | 1.31 | 1.40 | ns | 1.28 | 1.35 | 1.32 | 1.36 | ns |
| Shrug off or don't remember stories | 1.52 | 1.18 | 1.26 | 1.25 | ns | 1.12 | 1.16 | 1.25 | 1.23 | ns |
| Behavioral Items | | | | | | | | | | |
| Have you acted to solve problems on the report? | 1.38 | 1.36 | 1.29 | 1.29 | ns | 1.39 | 1.35 | 1.30 | 1.31 | ns |
| Have you acted to avoid risks? | 1.54 | 1.56 | 1.55 | 1.55 | ns | 1.55 | 1.62 | 1.55 | 1.52 | ns |

[a] Higher numbers indicate more positive responses (4 equals "very important," "agree strongly," and "very adequate").
[b] Significance levels are based on distributions of *f* ratios from Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) adjusting for initial between-group differences (Reichardt, 1979).

**Table 3.** Mean Responses for Policy Elites[a]

| | Exposed ($N$ = 23) | | Unexposed ($N$ = 8) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre | Post | Pre | Post | Sig.[b] |
| Agency Evaluations | | | | | |
| Chicago Fire Department | 3.42 | 2.79 | 2.71 | 2.71 | ns |
| U.S. Department of Energy | 2.50 | 2.05 | 2.71 | 3.00 | * |
| U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | 2.91 | 2.27 | 3.13 | 3.13 | * |
| Occupational Safety and Health Administration | 2.33 | 2.00 | 3.13 | 3.25 | * |
| Department of Streets and Sanitation | 2.83 | 2.72 | 3.00 | 3.00 | ns |
| Bureau of Inspectional Services | 2.20 | 2.07 | 2.75 | 2.75 | ns |
| Police Department | 2.84 | 2.84 | 3.57 | 3.57 | ns |
| Park District | 2.60 | 2.55 | 3.20 | 3.20 | ns |
| U.S. Social Security Commission | 2.56 | 2.50 | 3.00 | 3.50 | * |
| U.S. Department of Immigration | 2.29 | 2.21 | 3.00 | 3.17 | ns |
| U.S. Department of Health & Human Services | 2.45 | 2.40 | 3.17 | 3.17 | ns |
| Agenda-Setting | | | | | |
| Importance of toxic waste disposal | 3.52 | 3.61 | 2.63 | 2.63 | ns |
| Importance of environmental pollutants | 3.09 | 3.27 | 2.63 | 2.25 | * |
| Importance of violent crime | 3.48 | 3.39 | 3.38 | 3.50 | ns |
| Importance of unemployment | 3.74 | 3.61 | 3.75 | 3.75 | ns |
| Importance of police brutality | 2.76 | 2.67 | 2.00 | 2.00 | ns |
| Importance of child abuse | 3.32 | 3.18 | 3.50 | 3.17 | ns |
| Behavioral | | | | | |
| Past time spent on toxic waste problems | 2.39 | 2.57 | 2.38 | 2.38 | ns |
| Ideal time spent on toxic waste problems | 2.64 | 2.73 | 2.50 | 2.63 | ns |
| Expected future time spent on toxic waste problems | 2.50 | 3.05 | 2.50 | 2.25 | * |

[a] Higher numbers indicate more positive responses (4 = "very important" or does job "very well").
[b] Significance levels are based on distributions of $f$ ratios from Analyses of Covariance adjusting for initial between-group differences (Reichardt, 1979).

for the problems disclosed. Change in the evaluation of the fourth agency, the Chicago Fire Department, was in the expected downward direction ($p < .10$). Change was also significant for one of the seven unrelated agencies added as controls—the U.S. Social Security Commission—but this appears to be a chance change by the unexposed policy elites whose evaluations increased to more positive ones while the series-exposed elites' evaluations did not change.

Marked changes also occurred on one of the questions designed to measure the behavior of policymakers. When asked, "In the coming months, how much of your time do you think *will* be spent on toxic waste disposal problems?" the group exposed to the series changed significantly in the direction of "more" time. This finding is consistent with our analysis of the actual policymaking consequences of the investigative series. Since the series aired, each of the governmental agencies named by Channel 5 initiated actions to monitor the University's compliance with toxic waste disposal regulations.

Perhaps the most dramatic of these enforcement efforts was made by the Chicago Fire Department. On the morning after the first broadcast, a team of high-ranking Department officials inspected the buildings where chemical wastes were stored, and cited the University for failing to comply with 20 of the City's safety regulations. The Department gave the University 30 days to comply with its standards and threatened publicly to initiate criminal proceedings if it failed to do so.

Media coverage of the Fire Department's initiative was swift. A Chicago *Tribune* headline in the newspaper's next edition read: "City Faults U of C on Fire Safety," and the *Sun-Times* reported that the "U of C Is Cited as Fire Violator." The *Hyde Park Herald*, a weekly newspaper serving the community surrounding the University, headlined: "UC Responds to Hazard Charge" and called editorially for a study of the problem. All three newspapers credited the Channel 5 investigation as the catalyst for the governmental actions.

Channel 5 itself reported the "Fire Department crackdown" on its evening newscast later the same day. (The station's television competitors ignored the story, however.) Pictures of the Department's inspections were shown, and the story was repeated in the remaining two segments of the investigative series. The television station claimed that the action was taken "in response to our series on hazardous waste disposal problems at the University." In fact, however, Channel 5 correspondent Peter Karl had discussed the possibility of an inspection in several telephone conversations with Fire Department officials two days *before* the first part of the series was aired. The officials had agreed both that the inspection would occur and that it would not take place until the morning *after* the airing of the initial broadcast. Channel 5, in turn, covered the inspection as if it occurred at the initiative of the

Fire Department, i.e., without direct prodding by its investigative reporter.

This form of journalist–policymaker collaboration has been described in our earlier studies (Cook et al., 1983; Molotch, Protess, and Gordon, 1987). What is significant here is that general public and policymaker respondents were exposed to news media stories about governmental "reforms" before the allegations in Channel 5's three-part series had been completely aired. Thus, the public's perceptions of the series may have been colored somewhat by media reports that included the presentation of both a problem and its "solution."

Interviews by researchers with Fire Department officials at the end of the 30-day compliance period indicated that the University had, in fact, corrected the fire hazard aspect of its waste disposal problem. The University also was implementing plans for the much-delayed facility to provide a more permanent solution to its environmental difficulties. However, content analyses of Channel 5 and other media revealed that the media did not cover these *post*series developments. Unlike our study of the *Sun–Times* rape series, the issues of toxic waste disposal at the University of Chicago or elsewhere did not rise on the news media's agenda of concerns. Content analysis of the Chicago *Tribune* for 3-month periods both before and after the publication of the Channel 5 series showed a slight *decline* in column inches of news stories and editorials on toxic waste disposal problems. A review of the assignment log at Channel 5 for the same periods showed only a minor increase in the frequency of such stories.

Similarly, Table 3 shows that policymakers' assessments of the *importance* of toxic waste disposal as an issue did not change significantly after the broadcast of the series. Perhaps this was because by the end of the series and the time of the posttest interview, the problems were being eliminated. There is no indication that the series produced any substantive initiatives (i.e., legislative, regulative, or budgetary) to deal with larger questions of toxic waste disposal, either on college campuses or elsewhere in the U.S. society. Thus, we call its policy impact "individualistic" because it was specific only to the particular problem documented at the University of Chicago.

## Discussion of Findings

With the completion of this fourth study, we are somewhat better able to compare the varying impacts of the different investigative reports. Table 4 summarizes the results of the four case studies. Both the home health care broadcast and the police brutality television series were found to have greater *public* impact than either the toxic waste or the

**Table 4.** Summary of Four Case Study Findings of the Impact of Investigative Reports on the Public, Policy Elites, and Policy

| Subject of Case Study | Medium | Format | Journalists' Involvement with Policymakers | General Public Impact | Elite Impact | Policymaking Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Home health care fraud and abuse ("The Home Health Hustle") | Network television | Single report | Extensive | Yes | Yes | Yes (Symbolic) |
| 2. Assaults against women ("Rape: Every Woman's Nightmare") | Local newspaper | 5-part series | Minimal | No | No | Yes (Symbolic) |
| 3. Police brutality ("Beating Justice") | Local television | 5-part series | Minimal | Yes | No | Yes (Substantive) |
| 4. Toxic waste disposal ("Wasted Time") | Local television | 3-part series | Extensive | No | Yes | Yes (Individualistic) |

rape series. Nonetheless, like the police brutality series, the toxic waste investigation resulted in significant changes in the attitudes and actions of *policymakers*. The policymaking impact of the current case is the most focused. It appears to be attributable more to journalistic lobbying with Fire Department officials than to the published investigative reports themselves. This is similar to the developments that occurred in the home health care investigation, where we found that it was not the members of the public who were so aroused by the report that they pressured their representatives to act. Rather, it was the active collaboration between journalists and policymakers during the prepublication phase of investigation that generated the policy outcome. In the two other cases that we studied, no such collaboration occurred, but policy changes nonetheless resulted.

What factors account for these similarities and differences? This question probably has a different answer depending on the target of impact that one wishes to understand—on the public, on elites, or on policy itself. For public attitudes to change, two factors seem to be important—the nature of the media portrayal and the frequency of attention by the media to the issue in the past. When the media portray an issue in an unambiguous way with dramatic, convincing, and clear evidence, public attitudes are more likely to change (see also Tyler and Cook, 1984:706). For example, the police brutality series documented the seriousness of the problem thoroughly, including a statistical analysis of brutality cases against the police and a 5-year review of all lawsuits filed against police in federal courts in Chicago. Its interviews with brutalized victims and action shots of identified "villains" made for powerful drama. In all these respects, the series was most similar to the home health care television report. Both investigations had significant impacts on the public.

On the other hand, like the *Sun–Times* rape series, Channel 5's "Wasted Time" investigation was stylistically ambiguous. Villains and victims were not well-defined. Rather, the television station attributed the problem to "bureaucratic delays," not venal conduct. The harm alleged was more *potential* than actual, and the presentation of the findings contained frequent exceptions and caveats. For example, the second part of the series began with the statement by correspondent Karl that "this is not a scare story of radioactive contamination on the campus of the University of Chicago."[4]

4. The script for the series "Wasted Time" is replete with statements that may have limited its impact. It refers repeatedly to the "*potential* for problems," rather than actual problems; it states that "no questions have been raised about the reported levels of radiation in various classrooms . . ."; it defines the source of the problem as "bureaucratic and academic red tape" and "a possible conflict of interest"; and admits that "plans for the structure [that would wipe out the danger] will finally be submitted to the

Moreover, the edge of the toxic waste series' potential impact may have been dulled by the simultaneous presentation of problems and their solution, which created the impression that the danger was under control. The repeated mention that a permanent solution would result from the University's construction of an inexpensive facility (which had already been planned) further circumscribed the scope of the problem.

The equivocal nature of the presentation may help to explain why there was a tendency for posttest anxiety about the problem to be reduced. It may also help to explain why respondents in the exposed groups were somewhat more likely to be " 'confused' [about] news stories about environmental problems, like chemical or toxic wastes. . . ." In sum, the actual importance or seriousness of a problem may be less significant for influencing public attitudes than its "mediated reality" (Nimmo and Combs, 1983).

The second factor that seems important for influencing general public attitudes is the nature of the issue that the media are addressing. Certain issues receive fairly consistent treatment by journalists. Their place on the news media's agenda of interests may be higher or lower at different times, but they regularly tend to be the object of reportorial scrutiny. Examples include news about crime, governmental waste and corruption, and corporate windfall profit making. Borrowing from terminology used in a somewhat different context, we call these topics "recurring issues" in the news (Walker, 1977). Investigative stories about recurring issues have lower impact potential. Media effects are limited by the routine discussion of such issues in news stories, creating an information blur that may obscure the transmission of even unique disclosures. Further, as information is accumulated about a particular issue over time, the effect of subsequent communication tends to diminish (Saltiel and Woelfel, 1975; Downs, 1972). Thus, the impact of investigative reports about rape, toxic waste, and police brutality in Chicago may have been circumscribed by their appearance in the midst of a recurring stream of news events on these subjects.

On the other hand, issues that become the subject of breakthrough news reports have a greater opportunity to produce effects. The home health care report provides an example of a "nonrecurring issue" in the news, one that has received infrequent or no prior attention from journalists. Investigative news stories about such issues have higher

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EPA for approval" (Transcribed Manuscript, "Wasted Time," WMAQ-TV, 13–15 May 1984). When interviewed about the reason for the wording of the script, correspondent Karl stated that "we could only say what we had. I wish we could have made it stronger, but the findings didn't allow it" (Interview by David L. Protess with Peter Karl, 4 June 1984).

impact potential because they reveal matters that may be relatively unknown before their publication. The public's lack of accumulated information on these issues may increase its susceptibility to investigative media messages (Cook et al., 1983), although the effects may not be long-lasting (Watt and van den Berg, 1981; Saltiel and Woelfel, 1975; Downs, 1972).

We would suggest that news media investigative reports with the maximum ability to produce attitude change are those that involve unambiguous presentations of nonrecurring issues. This may explain why the home health care investigation, which spotlighted an "undiscovered" problem by showing greedy agency directors victimizing the elderly and handicapped, had the strongest public impact of the four case studies. Conversely, ambiguously presented reports on recurring issues, like the rape series and toxic waste investigation, have the least opportunity to change public attitudes.

Other types of investigative reports tend to produce in-between cases. The effects of the unambiguous police brutality series may have been delimited by the recurring nature of its subject, at least in Chicago. These kinds of investigative stories may result in significant *attitude* changes on particular items, while falling short of producing a change in the public's *agenda* priorities. We would hypothesize similar "in-between" effects for ambiguously presented, nonrecurring issues. As shown in Figure 1, it is the combination of an issue's "newness" on the media's agenda and its portrayal that may determine the impact of investigative reporting on public attitudes.[5]

Explanations for the effects of news media investigations on policy elites and on policy are more complex and less well understood. Two of the four cases showed effects on elites, and in all four cases, policymaking effects occurred. A review of the four case studies suggests that many factors may influence the nature and extent of governmental responses to investigative reporting. These factors include the timing of the publication in relation to political exigencies, the extent of journalistic collaboration with policymakers, the level of general public and interest group pressures, and the availability of cost-effective solutions to the problems disclosed.

In the toxic waste series, the proximate cause of the initial governmental response was the involvement in the policymaking process of the Channel 5 correspondent. The level of involvement was sufficient

5. We recognize that other factors, including audience receptiveness to particular media messages, have been found to explain the differential effects of news stories (Graber, 1984). However, our findings here and in the previous case studies do not show statistically significant differences between respondents with varying degrees of attentiveness to the investigative reports or with differing demographic characteristics. The effects of these and other factors will be examined further in future field experiments.

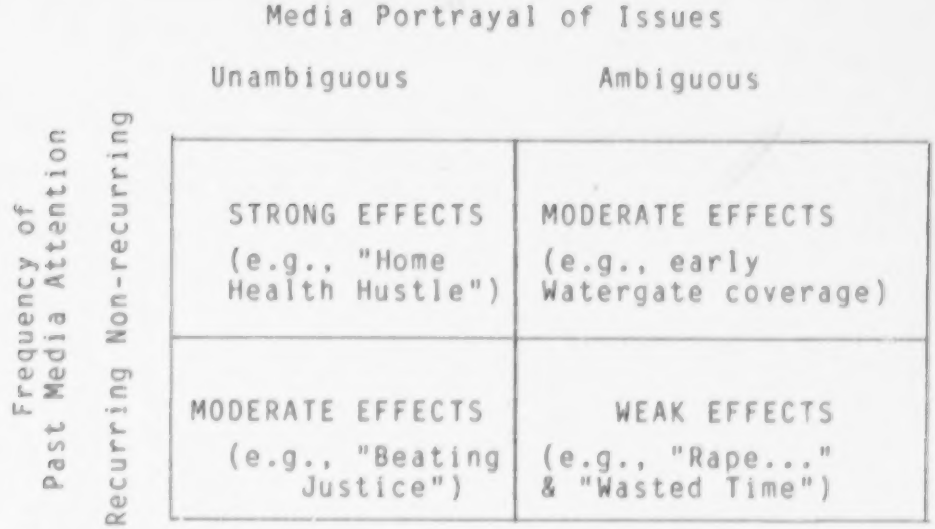


**Figure 1.** A Typology of the Effects of Investigative Reports on Public Attitudes[6]

to prompt an immediate effort to correct the specific problem at the University of Chicago. Likewise in the home health care case, the policy impact (legislation hearings and proposals for change) resulted from the active collaboration between journalists and policymakers (i.e., high-level staff members of the Senate Permanent Investigations Subcommittee).

In the other two cases, journalists did not orchestrate the policy impacts. In the rape study, we found that the series provided a platform for those already pushing for reform of rape legislation. Policymakers who already had proposals and programs ready to recommend before the series made their announcements soon after publication of

6. We do not yet have an experimental case study from our own work to enter as an example for the "moderate effects" cell shown in Figure 1. An example found elsewhere may be the journalistic investigation of Watergate in the first months after the break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in June 1972. One explanation for the lack of media impact of Watergate coverage during this time is that it was a "high threshold" issue that failed to receive sufficiently widespread attention and credibility (Lang and Lang, 1983). Our model and analyses reported elsewhere (Molotch, Protess, and Gordon, 1985) suggest a possible alternative explanation for the lack of agenda-setting effects. The focus of the journalistic disclosures in 1972 was on the highly complicated flow of campaign funds. While the gross misuse of Republican party political contributions (including the funding of the Watergate burglary) was certainly nonrecurring news, the dry stylistic content of the stories and distance from their ultimate presidential target may have limited the potential to reorder the public's agenda priorities. Such stories may be aberrations in the field of investigative reporting, where journalists often make concerted efforts to at least portray their findings as tangible and obtrusive even if the actual issues they are covering are symbolic and unobtrusive (Mollenhoff, 1981; Anderson, 1976).

the series, using the investigative report as a backdrop for their announcements.

In the police brutality study, the series also provided a platform but in a different way from that described above. The investigative report's results were used by Chicago mayoral challenger Harold Washington as ammunition against incumbent Mayor Jane Byrne, who had appointed the police superintendent. When elected, Washington was responsible for many of the policy changes in the police department.

Do investigative reports always result in some form of policy response? Investigative reports uncover problems in the social fabric of society. Officials directly responsible for the particular domain in which a problem is uncovered may feel obligated to take some action to show they are "responsive" and "responsible." Since our cases are small in number and are not necessarily representative of all investigative reports, we cannot generalize. However, the results to date suggest that investigative reports may have more influence than previously thought. The evidence that such reports present about social conditions serves to put policymakers on the defensive. They must either attempt to justify the problem or act to solve it. Actions—symbolic, individualistic, or substantive—are the responses seen in the cases analyzed here.

The web of influences that affect the policymaking process is intricate and variable, as are the conditions for public attitude formation. Additional case studies are necessary to identify other influential factors, and to build and refine additional models of influence. As we continue to examine investigative reporting, we will try to understand further the link between media messages, the nature of the problems that are revealed, and the opinion and policy responses to them.

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**THE POLLS—A Review**

# THE USE OF PUBLIC OPINION DATA BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S COMMISSION ON PORNOGRAPHY

TOM W. SMITH

As part of its general analysis of social and behavior science research on pornography, the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography examined public attitudes toward pornography and how they have changed since the report of the earlier Commission on Obscenity and Pornography in 1970. They examined the social science literature on pornography "in recognition of the role it plays in determining legal standards and social policy" and studied "public opinion on pornography to systematically describe the nature of public perceptions of and experiences with such materials as well as policy preferences" (Commission, 1986: 901, 902).[1] The importance of assessing public opinion in regard to pornography was also made clear in reference to the formulation and implementation of the "contemporary community standards" rule established in *Miller vs. California* (1973) (Commission, 1986:240–275). In its review of public opinion on pornography, the Commission focused on three areas: "(1) public exposure to sexually explicit materials; (2) perceptions of the effects of pornography; and (3) opinions on the regulation of pornography" (Commission, 1986:912). While paying some attention to the distribution of opinion among the population as a whole and to subgroup differences by gender and age, the Commission focused in particular on how opinions changed from 1970 to 1985 (Commission, 1986: 910, 912, 937).

This review examines the Commission's analysis of public opinion data, points out certain weaknesses and limitations in their report, and presents additional data and analysis on trends in public opinion on pornography.

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1. For brevity, we will cite Attorney General's Commission on Pornography: Final Report as "Commission, 1986," in text.

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The Commission's analysis of public opinion on pornography is marred by several factors. The most serious of these are (1) inappropriate comparisons between variant samples and question wordings, (2) omitting statistical tests of significance when comparing survey results, and (3) failure to use the best available data.

## Inappropriate Comparisons

The Commission is sensitive to the problem of comparing samples and questions that are not fully comparable (Commission, 1986: 912, 915, 924), but at several points abandons its self-counsel and makes comparisons that are methodologically untenable and therefore substantively questionable. The following examples illustrate the range of problems encountered in the Commission's Report.

### GEBHARD'S STUDY ON THE ACQUISITION OF BASIC SEX INFORMATION

The Commission cites Gebhard's (1977) study on age and source of initial information about various sexual matters such as intercourse, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases. Gebhard concluded that people were learning about sexual matters at an earlier age and that informational sources have changed. Gebhard's conclusions are based on a comparison of Kinsey data collected between 1938 and 1960 for whites with some college education and a convenience sample ($N$ = 114) of undergraduates from a single university in 1975. Since the original Kinsey data represent a series of convenience samples accumulated in various ways from sundry groups over two decades (Cochran, Mostellar, and Tukey, 1954; Benson and Bentley, 1957; Wallin, 1949), they hardly offer a basis of comparison to anything, much less to a small convenience sample from a single university. The Commission is aware of the problematic nature of the comparisons and notes, "These results, however, are simply suggestive because of the difficulty of generalizing beyond these particular groups of respondents and the limited size of the 1975 sample" (pp. 915–916).

We have no strong quarrel with the Commission's handling of this particular comparison since they do qualify its findings and note its inadequacies,[2] but given the weakness of the original study we wonder if the results were worth citing at all and in particular worth a full page of discussion.

2. However, in the summary (Commission, 1986:937) the qualifications shrink to "sexual knowledge *appears* to be acquired at younger ages" (emphasis added).

TRENDS IN READING "PORNOGRAPHIC" MAGAZINES

As a general rule for comparing similar, but not identical questions, the Commission (1986:912) formulated the following rule:

> [W]here questions were examining similar issues but were not worded the same, only the questions which were more narrowly defined for the 1985 survey were included and any resulting error would be on the side of conservativism.

By this the Commission means that if the 1985 measure would measure lower levels of a behavior or less affect toward an object because of its phrasing compared to the 1970 question *and* the 1985 levels still exceeded the 1970 levels, then the observed difference between 1970 and 1985 would indicate that change had occurred and would underestimate the magnitude of the change.[3] The Commission applies their subset comparison rule to the following questions from the 1970 and 1985 surveys:

1970: During the past year, have you seen or read a magazine which you regarded as pornographic?

1985: Have you *ever* read *Playboy* magazine or *Penthouse* magazine?

Please tell me if the following apply to you or not?
- Sometimes buy or read magazines like *Playboy*.
  Sometimes buy or read magazines like *Hustler*.

The Commission notes that 20% reported reading a "pornographic magazine" in 1970, while "In contrast, two thirds of the 1985 respondents had read *Playboy* or *Penthouse* at some time" (p. 913). The Commission applies its subset comparison rule and draws the conclusion that exposure to sexually explicit magazines increased from 1970 to 1985. They note, "this is a loose comparison, only afforded by the

3. More formally, if we have set AB that consists of subsets A and B and if we have a measure of subset B at Time 2 and it shows more members than a measurement of set AB at Time 1, then it is possible to state with assurance that set AB has grown between Time 1 and Time 2 since even if subset A reduced to zero set AB is greater at Time 2 than at Time 1 since subset B by itself is greater than the total of set AB at Time 1. Now this procedure only works when the subsets are exclusively part of the larger set, that is, all A and all B are in set AB. In addition, we are assured of a clear interpretation of change only when the smaller subset exceeds the larger set. If not, we are left with no clear inference about change unless other assumptions are made. For example, *if* we assume that the ratio of A : B is the same at Time 2 as it was at Time 1, then we could estimate the incidence of AB at Time 2 with only information on the incidence of A *or* B at Time 2 and thus estimate how AB compares at Time 1 and Time 2. This would of course rest on an unproven assumption.

fact that the 1985 question is more specific in nature and, therefore, a more conservative estimate" (p. 913).

But the Commission is wrong on this point. First, the 1970 question refers to the "past year" while the 1985 question refers to "ever." The 1985 question clearly covers a longer time span than the 1970 question and therefore is not a subset of the former and the subset comparison rule cannot apply. Nor do the separate questions about *Playboy* and *Hustler* provide an appropriate base of comparison. They refer to a vague "sometimes" rather than the past year.[4]

Even if the time frames were the same, it is unlikely that the 1985 questions would refer to a subset of the 1970 question. Many people may not consider "*Playboy* magazine or *Penthouse* magazine" or even "magazines like *Hustler*" to be pornographic. For example, in 1970 readers of "magazines like *Playboy*" may well have responded in the negative to the 1970 "pornographic" question.[5]

Also, we cannot be at all sure of the differential impact on reporting of mentioning specific magazines (*Playboy, Penthouse, Hustler*) as compared to an abstract categorization such as "a magazine which you regarded as pornographic." It is likely that these two forms of questioning would trigger different cognitive processing and therefore result in differences in the response distributions.

Overall, for the above reasons, it is impossible to draw any conclusions on trends in reading sexually explicit magazines from the above two surveys.

## TRENDS IN THE REGULATION OF MOVIES AND MAGAZINES

The Commission also compared questions from the 1970 and 1985 surveys on the governmental regulation of sexually explicit movies and magazines. The wordings are as follows:

4. The Commission never fully cites the wordings of the 1970 and 1985 questions. This may have contributed to their inappropriate comparisons. In addition their discussion does not clearly distinguish between the two 1985 questions.

5. The 1970 report (Abelson et al., 1971:23) notes that people saying yes to the pornographic magazine questions named a "substantial number" of "general or special interest magazines of wide distribution" and the list they give includes many that would not be judged as "pornographic" by most people and most objective standards (e.g., *Good Housekeeping, Ladies Home Journal, Life, Look, McCall's, Reader's Digest, Vogue*). As they noted, "the range of content embodied in what different people consider pornographic appears to be extremely wide." However, they lack any information on what magazines people had read but did *not* consider as pornographic. We suspect that many people reading sexually oriented magazines such as *Playboy* may have not classified their reading material as "pornographic." We suspect that there is a high degree of individual variation in interpretation of the term "pornographic" in the context of this question.

1970: On the top of this card are descriptions of sexual material sometimes shown in movies in regular theaters. On the bottom of the card are some opinions about who it is all right to admit to movies showing such material.

For each description on top tell me which, if any, group on the bottom it is right to admit to these movies.

Let's start with Number 1. Which statement comes closest to your opinion about who it is all right to admit to these movies? Just tell me the letter.

1. Scenes which are mainly for the purpose of showing the sex organs of a man or a woman.
2. Mouth–sex organ contact between a man and a woman.
3. A man or a woman having (or appearing to have) sexual intercourse.
4. Sexual activities between people of the same sex.
5. Sex activities which include whips, belts, or spankings.

A. None—there is no one it is all right to admit.
B. It is all right to admit people like me but not others.
C. It is all right to admit adults 21 and over but not persons under 21.
D. It is all right to admit persons 16 or older but not persons under 16.
E. It is all right to admit anyone who wishes to be admitted.

1985: For each item that I read, tell me, if you feel it should be *totally banned* for sale to adults, sold to adults as long as there is *no public* display, or should be sold to adults with *no restrictions*.

Magazines that show nudity
Magazines that show adults having sexual relations
Magazines that show sexual violence
Theater showings of X-rated movies
Theater showings of movies that depict sexual violence
Sale or rental of X-rated video cassettes for home viewing
Sale or rental of video cassettes featuring sexual violence

The Commission (1985:923–924) concludes that "while some of the categories between 1970 and 1985 are not directly comparable, a reasonable comparison can be made for the category describing depictions of sexual intercourse." They assert that the percent favoring no restrictions on magazines depicting sexual intercourse rose from 4% in 1970 to 12% in 1985. Similarly, the percent favoring no restrictions for

movies rose from 4% to 20%. They add the qualification that "The assumption we make here, of course, is that most respondents associate X-rated movies with depictions of sexual intercourse, but these comparisons are made with this caveat in mind."

The Commission should have had more caveats in mind. The questions are so different in form that it is hard to describe the multitude of ways in which they vary, and we cite only some major differences. First, the 1970 wording talks of "who it is all right to admit to movies." It does not directly refer to any governmental/community restrictions to enforce such preferences of respondents and we cannot be at all sure that respondents thought in terms of such regulations. The 1985 question on the other hand refers to having the object "totally banned . . . no public display . . . no restrictions," a formulation that at least strongly implies government action. Second, even assuming that respondents in both years are referring to legal restrictions, the phrasing of the questions is quite different. In an approximate fashion, the difference between these questions resembles the classic distinction between the forbid/allow questions (Schuman and Presser, 1981; Hippler and Schwarz, 1986). Studies show that questions asking about "forbidding" an activity usually produce dramatically different results than do questions asking about "allowing" the same activity (i.e., the percent wanting to "forbid" the activity is usually much lower, typically 15%–25% lower, than the percent "not allowing" the same thing). The difference in these questions between "all right to admit" and "should totally ban . . . or impose no restrictions" are both different enough from one another and similar enough to the forbid/allow examples to warn that similar wording effects could be present. Third, what the Commission counts as the "No Restrictions" option in 1970 (option E) clearly implies that children under 16 would be allowed to view the movies and magazines in question, while in the 1985 question the "No Restriction" option explicitly refers to selling only to *adults*. Numerous other differences totally mar any possible comparison of these questions, but those listed above are sufficient to document the problem.

## CHANGES IN COMMUNITY STANDARDS

The Commission (1986:924) compared nearly identical questions asked by Gallup on community standards in 1977 and 1985:

> Do you think the standards in your [1977: this] community regarding the sale of sexually explicit material should be stricter than they are now, not as strict or kept as they are now?

| | 1977 | 1985 |
|---|---|---|
| Should be stricter | 45% | 43% |
| Kept as now | 35 | 48 |
| Should be less strict | 6 | 4 |
| Don't know | 14 | 5 |

They draw the following conclusion from the above data. "There were as many who indicated standards should be stricter in 1977 as in 1985—forty-five percent versus forty-three percent." This analysis is correct as far as it goes, but it completely ignores the large and statistically significant ($p < .001$, see note 9 below) increase in the "Kept as now" category which rose by 13 percentage points and the moderately large drop in the "Don't know" category. There are several ways to interpret this switch. Taken at its face value, it suggests that more people made up their minds about this issue and that this group as well as small segments of both extremes (the stricter and less strict groups) moved toward the middle and the status quo. However, the atypically large shift in levels of "Don't know" may signal some measurement artifact, perhaps a result of the shift from personal interviewing in 1977 to telephone interviewing in 1985.[6]

A second aspect of this question important to its evaluation is that it asks people to express their satisfaction with what they perceive to be current community standards. The judgment is a relative, not an absolute expression. For example, if community standards (e.g., laws and law enforcement practices) were actually becoming stricter *and* thereby conforming more closely to preexisting public opinion, then the percentage saying stricter would decrease and the percent saying about right would increase. This shift would not indicate that people were more permissive on pornography, but only that the community standards had come into greater accord with the standards of more of the citizenry.

The possible relationship between community standards and standards of the community as expressed by a sample of citizens is both complex and controversial (Herrman and Bordner, 1983; Wallace, 1973). We simply note that several things could be changing—most notably, the objective standards of the community, the popular perception of these standards, and the popular evaluation of whether the standards are or are not strict enough—and with this question it is impossible to know which of these elements is changing.

6. Item nonresponse levels are sensitive to various measurement artifacts and in particular to house effects (Smith, 1978, 1982). However, the DK level for telephone interviews has not usually been found to differ greatly from personal interviews and usually tends to be slightly higher on telephone interviews than in person (Smith, 1984).

CHANGES IN PERCEPTIONS OF PORNOGRAPHY'S EFFECTS

The Commission (1986:932–933) compared questions asked in 1970 and in 1985 regarding perceptions of the effects of sexually explicit material:

1970: On this card are some opinions about the effects of looking at or reading sexual materials. As I read the letter of each one please tell me if you think sexual materials *do* or *do not* have these effects. Let's start with letter a.

a. Sexual materials provide entertainment
b. Sexual materials make people bored with sexual materials
c. Sexual materials provide an outlet for bottled up impulses
d. Sexual materials make people sex crazy
e. Sexual materials give relief to people who have sex problems
f. Sexual materials lead to a breakdown of morals
g. Sexual materials improve sexual relations of some married couples
h. Sexual materials provide information about sex
i. Sexual materials excite people sexually
j. Sexual materials lead people to commit rape
k. Sexual materials lead people to lose respect for women
l. Sexual materials make men want to do new things with their wives

1985: Thinking of sexually explicit magazines, movies, video cassettes, and books, tell me if you believe the following are true or not true:

a. They provide information about sex
b. They lead some people to commit rape or sexual violence
c. They provide a safe outlet for people with sexual problems
d. They lead some people to lose respect for women
e. They can help improve the sex lives of some couples
f. They provide entertainment
g. They lead to a breakdown of morals

In comparing these two questions the Commission felt it was on solid ground, noting that the "1970 and 1985 data in this case were directly comparable since the same categories of effects were used" (p. 932) and the "item choices provided the 1970 respondents were worded in the same way or were reasonably similar" (p. 933). They conclude that several notable changes occurred in the public perceptions of the effects of sexually explicit materials and stress the increases in the percent believing that these materials lead to less respect for women (43%

in 1970 to 76% in 1985) and more sexually motivated violence toward women (49% in 1970 to 73% in 1985) (Commission, 1986:933, 937).

But once again the Commission is off the track. First, the 1970 question refers only to "looking at or reading sexual materials" while the 1985 question mentions sexually explicit magazines, movies, video cassettes, and books." It is unclear whether the 1970 question covers both written and audio-video presentations. The inclusion of movies depends on whether respondents interpreted "seeing" as including films. Also, the 1970 question refers to "sexual" materials while the 1985 question uses the term "sexually explicit." In both cases, the 1970 question offers a weaker stimulus, probably not including movies in the minds of many respondents and perhaps also making respondents think of a less provocative range of materials. Second, several of the compared categories differ in notable and biasing ways between surveys. The item on respect for women (k in 1970, and d in 1985) is significantly qualified by the insertion of the word "some." It is obviously much easier to agree to the 1985 wording with this qualification than the 1970 wording that implies "most" or "in general." The item on rape or sexual violence is compromised in a similar fashion. Moreover, the addition of the phrase "or sexual violence" probably makes it easier to agree with the 1985 wording. Since in both cases the question is easier to answer in the affirmative in its 1985 version, it is not possible to interpret the increase in percentages as representing true change for these highlighted questions. Notable changes also occurred on the items about relief from sexual problems (1970e and 1985c) and improved sex relations for couples (1970g and 1985e).

In sum, virtually every over-time comparison that the Commission carried out is extremely suspect, suffering from serious incompatibility of questions and other measurement variations.

## Significance Testing

In none of the comparisons across time or across age and sex subgroups did the Commission apply tests of statistical significance to see if the differences could be inferred as resulting from the true variation rather than chance differences arising from sampling variation. This neglect occurs even though the Commission elsewhere questions research findings that failed to apply such tests (p. 153, n. 25)[7] and showed an awareness of the rudiments of applying such tests to sur-

7. This call for tests of significance comes in the individual Commissioner statements section in a piece by Father Bruce Ritter, "Nonviolent, sexually explicit material and sexual violence."

veys (p. 911, n. 1119, and p. 925, n. 1120). None of their comparisons, including those that refer to "significant" differences or changes (e.g., pp. 923, 932) appear to have been subjected to appropriate tests of statistical significance and the conclusions are suspect on this ground.

## Other Data, More and Better Evidence

The Commission failed to include in their report a large part of the existent public opinion data, ignored data that they had in their possession, and, as a result, in a number of instances failed to present the best evidence available on the issues they examined.

In its report the Commission primarily used the 1970 survey conducted for the earlier Commission on Obscenity and Pornography (Abelson et al., 1971) and the 1985 *Newsweek*/Gallup survey ("The war against pornography," 1985). Some use was also made of two questions from a 1977 Gallup survey and one question from a 1986 *Washington Post*/Associated Press poll. In addition, the Commission cited data from a survey in Canada (Check, 1985) and the Gebhard (1977) study noted earlier. This inventory of surveys and questions represents only a small fraction of recent survey questions on the topic of pornography. As of 15 September 1986, the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research listed 96 questions appearing in national, United States surveys and catalogued under the subject "pornography."[8] Many of these questions dealt with the very topics that the Commission chose to focus on in their review of public opinion data.

### TRENDS IN VIEWING X-RATED MOVIES

The Commission noted that "The marked difference between the questions asked at both time points [1970 and 1985] precludes any conclusion about any increase or decrease in film viewing in the last fifteen years" (p. 914). Table 1 shows however that information does exist on this trend. Item A, on having viewed an X-rated movie in the last year, shows a nonconstant, nonlinear trend,[9] with viewing monotonically

8. As determined by using the computerized POLL (Public Opinion Locating Library) system. See also "A pornography report" (1986).

9. The statistical procedures applied here are described in detail in Taylor (1980). In brief, the procedure tries to model trend data by testing constant and linear fits to the observations. There are four possible outcomes of these tests: (1) constant, (2) significant linear component, (3) significant linear trend, and (4) nonconstant, nonlinear. The constant model is accepted when there is no significant variation from the constant or pooled proportion. The significant linear component model is accepted when (*a*) the constant model is rejected and (*b*) the linear model is also rejected, but (*c*) the linear model is a significant improvement over the constant model. The significant linear model is ac-

**Table 1.** Trends in Viewing Sexually Explicit Movies

| A. Have you seen an X-rated movie in the last year?[a] | 1973 | 1975 | 1976 | 1978 | 1980 | 1983 | 1984 | 1986 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes (%) | 25.4 | 18.9 | 18.2 | 15.0 | 16.0 | 19.6 | 23.6 | 24.8 |
| (*N*) | (1491) | (1482) | (1492) | (1524) | (1462) | (1588) | (1464) | (1460) |

| B. Ever seen an X-rated movie?[b] | 10/1971 | 3/1977 | 4–5/1977 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 39.0% | 33.9% | 45% |
| No | 57.2 | 64.6 | 54 |
| Don't know, no answer | 3.9 | 1.5 | 1 |
| (*N*) | (1499) | (1507) | (2002) |

[a] Data from the General Social Survey (GSS) of NORC. Surveys conducted in February/April of each year. "Don't knows" and "no answers" are excluded from the base. For full details see Davis and Smith (1986).

[b] For 1971: Now here is a list of a number of things. Would you read down the list and for each one tell me whether you have ever done it or not? You can just read the number and the answer "Yes" or "No."

1. Won a prize in a contest or lottery.
2. Been interviewed in a poll (before today).
3. Worn a wig.
4. Grown a mustache or beard.
5. Dyed your hair.
6. Been held at gun or knife point.
7. Spent the night in jail.
8. Smoked marijuana.
9. Gone swimming nude or "skinny dipping" with a mixed group.
10. Gone to an X-rated movie.
11. Been to a psychiatrist.
12. Ridden on a motorcycle.

(Roper Commercial #524)

For 3/1977: Have you ever happened to have seen an X-rated movie? (Gallup, AIPO #969)

For 4–5/1977: Have you ever seen an X-rated movie? (Roper Report 77-5)

dropping from 1973 to 1978 and then rising in a similar fashion from 1978 to 1986. Both the 1973–1978 decline and the 1978–1986 increase are significant linear trends (−1.95 percentage points per annum from 1973 to 1978 and +1.31 percentage points per annum from 1978 to 1986). It is widely believed (but not testable with this question) that the decline from 1973 to 1978 resulted from changes in the application of the movie rating system during this period. While the "X" designation originally applied to such major motion pictures as *Last Tango in Paris* (1972) and *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), since the mid-seventies it has been used almost exclusively for sexually explicit movies aimed at the adult-theater trade. The rise since 1978 is generally associated with the increase in the homeviewing of X-rated movies on VCRs.

Item B on Table 1, on ever having seen X-rated movies, illustrates the problem of using variant wordings. A comparison of the October 1971 point with the March 1977 point shows a significant *decline* ($p = .01$)[10] of 0.8 percentage points per annum. Using the October 1971 and the April/May 1977 points shows a significant ($p = .002$) *increase* of 1.0 percentage points per annum. The reason for this disagreement over even the *direction* of change is that the two 1977 points differ significantly ($p < .001$). This large difference underscores the danger of working with variant wordings and demonstrates that no meaningful inference about trends in X-rated viewing can be drawn from these variants.

## TRENDS IN ATTITUDES TOWARD GOVERNMENT REGULATION OF PORNOGRAPHY

The Commission concluded on the basis of its comparison of the 1970 and 1985 surveys that public permissiveness toward pornography had increased over the last decade and a half. Table 2 presents three time series that question that conclusion. From 1973 to 1986 there was no

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cepted when (*a*) the constant model is rejected, and (*b*) there is no significant variation from the best linear fit. The nonconstant, nonlinear model is accepted when (*a*) the constant model is rejected, (*b*) the linear model is rejected, and (*c*) the improvement between the constant and linear models is not significant. Slopes for the linear fit are expressed in changes in percentage points per annum.

10. Rather than use the SRS (simple random sample) assumptions, we adjust the sampling variance by 1.3 to account for the design effects arising from the multistage cluster designs used by national personal interviews. The 1.3 design effect was based on studies of the GSS in 1975–76 and 1983, and we do not know the actual design effect of other surveys. They may have design effects greater or less than this figure. In every case the data were analyzed using both SRS assumptions and this 1.3 design effect adjustment, and there were no substantial or substantive changes in conclusions.

change in the percentages favoring "laws against the distribution of pornography whatever the age," but there was a significant linear decline in the percentages favoring "no laws forbidding the distribution of pornography" (0.5 percentage points per annum). For the period of 1975 to 1982, the question on a government crackdown also shows a complex pattern. Overall, the trend is nonconstant and nonlinear. Support for a crackdown rises rapidly from 1975 to 1977 and then falls between 1977 and 1982. If we look only at the two end points (1975 and 1982), we find a significant decline in disagreement with a government crackdown. This trend is butressed by the significant ($p = .002$) shift between 1976 and 1982 in approval of banning pornographic bookstores from residential shopping areas. In brief, there are at least three time series with identically worded questions on various aspects of government regulation of pornography that the Commission could have drawn upon. If they had done so, they would probably have come to the conclusion that support for government regulation of pornography rose from the mid-seventies to the mid-eighties.

### TRENDS IN PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTS OF PORNOGRAPHY

The Commission also failed to utilize the single best available time series measuring public opinion on pornography's impact. Modeled after the original question of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, the General Social Survey has tracked public attitudes on this topic from 1973 to 1986.[11] Changes have not been large, but for each effect, we find a significant linear trend (see Table 3). The two items that clearly referred to negative effects show increasing belief that pornography is associated with these results. Agreement that pornography breaks down morals rose 0.8 percentage points per annum, while the belief that it leads people to commit rape increased by 0.4 percentage points per annum. The one clear positive impact of pornography, that it provides information about sex, declined by 0.3 percentage points per annum. The final effect, that pornography provides "an outlet for the bottled-up impulses," was originally classified by the earlier Commission (Abelson et al., 1971:53) as a "socially desirable" effect, but we suspect that many people probably see it as negative. They probably consider it an inappropriate "outlet" in the same sense

11. These items are much closer to the original 1970 survey items than the 1985 items, but there are enough differences to possibly compromise comparisons between the 1970 survey and the 1973–1986 series. For that reason, we have restricted our analysis to the later series.

**Table 2.** Trends on Government Regulation of Pornography

A. Which of these statements comes closest to your feeling about pornography laws?
There should be laws against the distribution of pornography whatever the age.
There should be laws against the distribution of pornography to persons under 18.
There should be no laws forbidding the distribution of pornography.

| | 1973 | 1975 | 1976 | 1978 | 1980 | 1983 | 1984 | 1986 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Laws whatever the age | 41.8% | 40.4% | 40.0% | 43.2% | 40.3% | 41.1% | 40.6% | 42.6% |
| Laws for under 18 | 47.1 | 47.6 | 49.8 | 48.5 | 51.4 | 53.1 | 54.0 | 52.8 |
| No laws | 9.2 | 10.7 | 8.1 | 7.3 | 6.1 | 4.5 | 4.2 | 3.6 |
| Don't know | 1.9 | 1.2 | 2.1 | 1.0 | 2.2 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.0 |
| (*N*) | (1498) | (1489) | (1496) | (1531) | (1468) | (1595) | (1464) | (1469) |

SOURCE: GSS, NORC. For full details see Davis and Smith (1986).

B. A number of controversial proposals are being discussed these days. I'd like you to tell me for each one whether you strongly agree with it, partially agree with it, or disagree with it.

The government should crack down more on pornography in movies, books, and nightclubs.

| | 5/1975 | 1/1976 | 7/1977 | 6/1982 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 45% | 47% | 56% | 50% |
| Partially agree | 19 | 22 | 20 | 22 |
| Disagree | 36 | 32 | 24 | 28 |
| (*N*) | (1014) | (951) | (1044) | (1010) |

SOURCE: Data from Yankelovich, Skelly, and White for *Time*. "Don't knows" or "no answers" excluded from the base. Surveys conducted by telephone. For details contact the Roper Center, University of Connecticut.

C. Here is a list of laws that have been proposed. Would you read down that list and for each tell me whether you would be for or against such a law?

A law banning pornographic book stores in residential shopping areas.

| | 12/1976 | 7/1982 |
|---|---|---|
| For | 70% | 75% |
| Against | 25 | 23 |
| Don't know | 5 | 3 |
| (*N*) | (2000) | (2000) |

SOURCE: Data from the Roper Organization. Surveys were conducted in person. For details contact the Roper Center, University of Connecticut.

**Table 3.** Trends in Perception of Pornographic Material

| The next questions are about pornography—books, magazines, and photographs that show or describe sex activity. | 1973 | 1975 | 1976 | 1978 | 1980 | 1983 | 1984 | 1986 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Sexual materials provide information about sex: | | | | | | | | |
| Has effects | 61.9% | 62.2% | 56.5% | 61.4% | 58.3% | 59.9% | 57.6% | 57.0% |
| Doesn't have | 32.6 | 29.2 | 36.4 | 32.6 | 34.4 | 35.1 | 37.4 | 37.9 |
| Don't know | 5.5 | 8.5 | 7.0 | 6.0 | 7.3 | 5.0 | 5.1 | 5.1 |
| (*N*) | (1499) | (1486) | (1493) | (1529) | (1465) | (1591) | (1463) | (1466) |
| B. Sexual materials lead to breakdown of morals: | | | | | | | | |
| Has effects | 52.9% | 51.4% | 55.0% | 56.9% | 60.3% | 58.7% | 61.8% | 62.2% |
| Doesn't have | 41.5 | 39.5 | 37.6 | 38.0 | 32.6 | 36.1 | 33.1 | 32.5 |
| Don't know | 5.6 | 9.0 | 7.4 | 5.1 | 7.0 | 5.2 | 5.1 | 5.3 |
| (*N*) | (1500) | (1487) | (1490) | (1529) | (1461) | (1589) | (1462) | (1463) |
| C. Sexual materials lead people to commit rape: | | | | | | | | |
| Has effects | 50.0% | 52.0% | 52.7% | 56.7% | 54.0% | 55.4% | 55.1% | 56.8% |
| Doesn't have | 42.9 | 37.9 | 38.1 | 35.9 | 36.8 | 37.5 | 37.1 | 36.3 |
| Don't know | 7.0 | 10.0 | 9.1 | 7.3 | 9.2 | 7.1 | 7.8 | 6.9 |
| (*N*) | (1495) | (1484) | (1492) | (1528) | (1462) | (1589) | (1462) | (1461) |
| D. Sexual materials provide an outlet for bottled-up impulses: | | | | | | | | |
| Has effects | 54.7% | 56.3% | 55.6% | 58.9% | 59.2% | 57.4% | 60.6% | 59.5% |
| Doesn't have | 35.2 | 27.8 | 28.6 | 29.1 | 26.9 | 31.5 | 27.3 | 30.6 |
| Don't know | 10.1 | 15.9 | 15.8 | 12.0 | 14.0 | 11.1 | 12.1 | 9.9 |
| (*N*) | (1499) | (1485) | (1491) | (1527) | (1462) | (1588) | (1463) | (1462) |

SOURCE: GSS, NORC. For full details see Davis and Smith (1986).

that getting drunk might be an outlet for bottled-up stress.[12] In any event, belief in this effect increased by 0.4 percentage points per annum. If we consider the trend in the outlet item as uninstructive because of its ambiguous nature, we find a consistent pattern that the public has become less sanguine about the effects of pornography.

In sum, the Commission's analysis of trends was greatly weakened by its failure to utilize time series that are readily available from public data archives, widely employed in the social science literature,[13] and even known to the Commission's staff.[14]

## Conclusion

The Commission's analysis of public opinion toward pornography is seriously flawed. It rested on a series of comparisons between variant wordings that provide little useful insight, since true change and measurement variations are completely confounded. While the Commission expressed wariness about the use of variant questions, they repeatedly proceeded to make inappropriate comparisons. Second, their analysis ignored statistical tests for significance. This makes both their subgroup and time-trend analysis problematic. Third, they either were unaware of or ignored relevant time series that employed consistent wordings and would have provided a solid empirical base for their analysis of recent trends. For these and related reasons,[15] the Commission's analysis of public opinion is methodologically unsound and therefore substantively suspect.

12. The ambiguous nature of this item is shown by the fact that it positively associates both with negative items (gamma = .409 with rape and .274 with moral breakdown) and the positive item (.373 with information). It has no association with gender, viewing X-rated movies, or regulating pornography, while the clear negative and positive items have associations with these items that are opposite in sign.

13. For uses of various items appearing in Tables 1–3, see Klenow and Crane, 1977; Taylor and Smith, 1978; Jelen, 1986; Stephan and McMullin, 1982; Wood and Hughes, 1984; Grassel, 1980; Koch and Davidson, 1985; Peek, 1985a, 1985b; Peek, Brown, and Witt, 1978; Peek, Grassel, and Reid, 1980; Reiss, 1981, 1986; and Rushing, Garibay, and Grassel, 1979.

14. The Commission requested from NORC the GSS data on pornography and was sent same (Edna F. Einsiedel, personal communications, 16 May 1985 and 6 June 1985).

15. Among other problems in the Commission's handling of public opinion data, we cite as examples the following: (1) sample size is not given for the 1977 Gallup survey (p. 931), (2) sample sizes are not given for subgroups (pp. 919–921, 928–930), (3) errors (generally small) appear in reporting the wordings of various questions (e.g., the mediums listed in Table 4, p. 926 are shortened approximations and "sex" not "sexual" is actually used in the same question), (4) question wordings are not reported for some items (e.g., pp. 920, 921), and (5) there are several careless errors in citing sources.

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# THE POLLS—A Report
## EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL WELFARE

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Government assistance in providing jobs is an area of social welfare policy of great interest and concern, but the government has not been very active in it since the days of public works projects during the New Deal and to a lesser extent since the job-training and manpower projects of the 1960s and 1970s (cf. Baumer and Van Horn, 1985). The larger economic issue of employment policy and planning has received even less attention as well (e.g., Osterman, 1986); in fact, the lack of attention to it by pollsters suggests that it is not often debated in the media and consequently among the public. In contrast, unemployment compensation is a visible and important social welfare benefit involving sizable expenditures, and debates about it have dealt with the extension of benefits. In this case, the lack of questions asked by pollsters almost certainly reflects a favorable public consensus toward this assistance. The public, to be sure, has been concerned less about the amount spent on unemployment payments than about actions directed toward unemployment itself—with the degree of their concern depending upon the magnitude and duration of unemployment (versus inflation and other economic problems) and the economic status and other characteristics of citizens whose opinions are examined (cf. Schiltz, 1970; Erskine, 1975; Feagan, 1975; De Boer, 1983; Hibbs, 1979).

Since the New Deal, there has been a recurring policy debate about

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whether "welfare" or "relief" should involve work and, if needed, jobs that the government itself would help provide. For reasons having to do with the work ethic and American values (cf. McClosky and Zaller, 1984; Shapiro et al., 1987), there has always been overwhelming support for work in place of welfare, but the public has disliked the limited amount of productive work that some public jobs seem to entail.

The public consensus is a broadly sweeping and vague preference in search of a viable policy. This has provided an opportunity for leadership and policy innovation that has not been seized upon since Roosevelt's action and rhetoric during the Great Depression (although at the time this article was written, state governors, Congress, and the Reagan administration were appearing to move toward a consensus on employment as a substitute for welfare). The one difference, to be sure, in contrast to today's higher level of structural unemployment, was that Roosevelt was able to treat employment programs as temporary policies until the economy picked up—which it did, as a result of World War II.

An active employment policy—not just education and job training, which have had considerable public support, despite occasional reports of abuses in programs such as CETA (the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act)—has yet to be viewed as a long-term *prevention* and *planning* strategy to eliminate dependency and to facilitate long-term growth by paying short-term costs (cf. Kirchheimer, 1986). There has been no shortage of work-related proposals for dealing with the problems faced and posed by the "underclass" (e.g., Kaus, 1986, and his critics), and given the levels of support for providing jobs—even in the abstract—it is noteworthy that this preference has had such little impact on public policy since 1960.

According to the survey data, there is apparently substantial variation in responses depending upon how questions are phrased concerning government's role "in making sure that people who want to work have jobs" and depending upon context effects. Employment is much less thought of as an entitlement than Social Security or medical care. The public clearly has mixed feelings about government-provided public service or public works projects, in which the government is the active employer of last resort. On the other hand, the public tends to support limited proposals such as having the government provide productive work or training and education for young adults, and proposals that only vaguely describe guarantees of employment.

Opposition increases as policy proposals deemphasize individual initiative or promise to guarantee a certain adequate standard of living; opposition decreases when the main alternative to government em-

ployment assistance is direct welfare payments. For this reason, "workfare" proposals are popular and less divisive among conservative segments of the public. Workfare also has substantial support among economically liberal segments of the public—among blacks, women, young adults, and liberal elites—but many of these may presume that constructive jobs and job training will be provided, along with support services such as child care and medical care (see Shapiro and Patterson, 1986). Moreover, it is probably anticipated that jobs would be available for *men* as well. In contrast, the conservative interpretation is that workfare involves forced self-help, in which individuals and the private sector, not the government, take the greatest responsibility for seeking and providing jobs and arranging for necessary services.

Support for the expansion of child-care facilities has increased due to the increasing numbers of women in the labor force and the need for there to be two wage-earners in order to afford a middle-class standard of living, but the public has been hesitant in seeking child-care services provided by the government. The public appears receptive toward innovations such as unpaid "parental leaves," but not, thus far, toward paid leaves or ideas such as job-sharing.

The survey questions reported here were taken from the files of the Policy Change and Public Opinion Change Project at NORC (originally supported by the National Science Foundation, grant #SES-7912969 A01). These data were compiled from published and unpublished sources, and with the assistance of the Roper Center, University of Connecticut; the Louis Harris Data Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, University of Michigan; and the NORC Library. Further information about these data can be obtained from the appropriate archive or survey organization. The national sample sizes are at least 1000 unless noted otherwise.

ABC/WP—American Broadcasting Company/*The Washington Post*
CR—Cambridge Reports, Inc., including *America Looks Ahead* Cambridge: Cambridge Reports, 1985, and *Cambridge Reports Trends & Forecasts*
Gallup—Gallup Polls, American Institute for Public Opinion
Harris—Louis Harris and Associates
MOR—Market Opinion Research
NBC—National Broadcasting Company
NYT/CBS—*The New York Times*/Columbia Broadcasting System
Penn & Schoen—Penn & Schoen Associates
Roper—Roper Organization

SRC—Survey Research Center, University of Michigan
SRC/CPS—Survey Research Center/Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan, American National Election Studies
Trendex—Trendex, Inc./General Electric Quarterly Index of Company Relations. NB: Samples drawn from telephone directories, not RDD.
Yankelovich—Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, Inc.

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## Unemployment vs. Other Economic Problems

*Harris:* If you had to choose, which do you think is a more serious problem for the country today—rising prices or high unemployment?

| | *3/73* | *8/75* | *8/76*[a] | *8/77* | *2/78* | *8/78* | *6/83*[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rising prices | 28% | 33% | 40% | 44% | 46% | 58% | 27% |
| High unemployment | 44 | 44 | 38 | 36 | 33 | 30 | 66 |
| Both | 26 | 22 | 20 | 19 | 16 | 9 | 6 |
| Not sure | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 1 |

[a] . . . a serious economic problem . . .

*Gallup:* Which do you think the federal government should give greater attention to—trying to curb inflation or trying to reduce unemployment?

| | *1/75* | *9/80* | *1/82* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Curb inflation | 46% | 61% | 44% |
| Reduce unemployment | 44 | 33 | 49 |
| No opinion | 10 | 6 | 7 |

*Roper:* If we have to choose between high unemployment and continuing inflation, which would you favor—letting unemployment stay high and having less of a rise in prices, or letting prices rise and having more people employed?

| | *10/75* | *10/76* | *4/78* | *9/78* | *9/79* | *6/80* | *4/81* | *1/82* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Let unemployment stay high and have less rise in prices | 19% | 23% | 30% | 24% | 28% | 29% | 27% | 26% |
| Let prices rise and have more people employed | 59 | 53 | 52 | 53 | 50 | 52 | 51 | 60 |
| Don't know | 23 | 24 | 18 | 23 | 23 | 18 | 22 | 14 |

*NBC:* What do you think is the most important economic problem for the government to help control during the next three years—unemployment, inflation, or interest rates?

| | *8/81* | *9/81* | *10/81*[a] | *11/81*[a] | *12/81*[a] | *Mid-1/82* | *Late-1/82*[a] | *3/82* | *5/82* | *6/82* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unemployment | 30% | 27% | 32% | 34% | 41% | 46% | 47% | 45% | 44% | 43% |
| Inflation | 47 | 42 | 34 | 32 | 29 | 25 | 21 | 24 | 21 | 19 |
| Interest rates | 19 | 27 | 30 | 28 | 24 | 23 | 26 | 27 | 30 | 34 |
| Not sure | 4 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 4 |

[a] In these months, the question read: ". . . high unemployment, high inflation, or high interest rates."

*Penn & Schoen:* Which of the following is the most important thing to do to improve the economy: cut spending, reduce high interest rates, balance the budget, cut taxes, or create more jobs? (Among probable voters.)

| | *6/82* | *8/82* | *10/82* | *12/82* | *2/83* | *4/83* | *6/83* | *8/83* | *11/83* | *2/84* | *6/84* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cut spending | 13% | 17% | 13% | 16% | 16% | 16% | 17% | 17% | 17% | 20% | 20% |
| Reduce interest rates | 32 | 22 | 18 | 15 | 18 | 15 | 14 | 17 | 16 | 11 | 10 |
| Balance the budget | 13 | 14 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 15 | 17 | 16 | 15 | 24 | 25 |
| Cut taxes | 4 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Create jobs | 34 | 39 | 51 | 50 | 47 | 45 | 42 | 41 | 42 | 34 | 36 |
| Don't know | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 |

## Government Effort and Spending

*Roper:* There are many problems facing our nation today. But at certain times some things are more important than others, and need more attention from our Federal Government than others . . . I'd like to know for each of the things on this list whether you think it is something the government should be making a *major* effort on now, or something the government should be making *some* effort on now, or something not needing any particular government effort now . . . Trying to reduce unemployment.

| | *6/82* | *6/83* | *6/84* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Major effort | 82% | 84% | 75% |
| Some effort | 14 | 13 | 20 |
| No particular effort now | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| Don't know | 2 | 1 | 2 |

*Trendex:* I would like to get your opinion on several areas of important government activities. As I read each one, please tell me if you would like the government to do more, do less or do about the same as they have been on . . . expanding employment.

| | *2/66* | *1/68* | *5/68* | *2/69* | *4/70* | *8/70* | *5/71* | *11/71* | *5/72* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do more | 58% | 56% | 62% | 55% | 59% | 64% | 73% | 73% | 73% |
| Do less | 14 | 14 | 15 | 17 | 15 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 9 |
| Do same | 27 | 28 | 20 | 27 | 23 | 21 | 14 | 14 | 16 |
| DK/NA | 10 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 |

| | *8/72* | *11/72* | *2/73* | *8/73* | *1/74* | *5/74* | *7/74* | *10/74* | *2/75* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do more | 73% | 75% | 69% | 64% | 65% | 62% | 62% | 65% | 71% |
| Do less | 10 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 12 | 14 | 15 | 14 | 13 |
| Do same | 14 | 14 | 18 | 21 | 19 | 20 | 20 | 18 | 14 |
| DK/NA | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |

| | *4/75* | *7/75* | *11/75* | *5/76* | *8/76* | *11/76* | *2/77* | *5/77* | *8/77* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do more | 70% | 68% | 68% | 66% | 67% | 69% | 73% | 70% | 70% |
| Do less | 15 | 14 | 17 | 16 | 15 | 17 | 14 | 15 | 13 |
| Do same | 13 | 16 | 14 | 16 | 15 | 13 | 12 | 14 | 16 |
| DK/NA | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

| | *11/77* | *2/78* | *5/78* | *11/78* | *2/79* | *5/79* | *8/79* | *11/79* | *2/80* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do more | 70% | 67% | 61% | 60% | 61% | 61% | 63% | 62% | 57% |
| Do less | 15 | 13 | 21 | 20 | 19 | 18 | 17 | 20 | 22 |
| Do same | 13 | 19 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 18 | 17 | 19 |
| DK/NA | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |

| | *5/80* | *8/80* | *11/80* | *2/81* | *5/81* | *8/81* | *2/82* | *5/82* | *8/82* | *11/82* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do more | 65% | 67% | 64% | 64% | 61% | 63% | 67% | 71% | 70% | 73% |
| Do less | 22 | 21 | 21 | 24 | 23 | 21 | 19 | 16 | 16 | 12 |
| Do same | 11 | 10 | 13 | 11 | 15 | 15 | 13 | 12 | 13 | 13 |
| DK/NA | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |

*Trendex:* I would like to get your opinion on several areas of important government activities. As I read each one, please tell me if you would like the government to do more, do less or do about the same as they have been on . . . expanding employment.
(For each "More" in this question, ask:) I notice you said you would like the

government to do more on expanding employment. Would you favor this increased activity if it required an increase in taxes?

| | 5/72 | 5/78 | 5/79 | 5/81 | 5/82 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 49% | 46% | 43% | 47% | 57% |
| No | 44 | 45 | 48 | 44 | 34 |
| DK/NA/Ref. | 7 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 9 |
| *N* = | 783 | 633 | 622 | 631 | 729 |

*Roper, SRC:* Turning now to the business of the country--we are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount . . . Unemployment—are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on unemployment insurance benefits?

| | *SRC* | | *Roper* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Spring 1961*[a] | *Fall 1961*[a] | *1981* | *1982* | *1983* |
| Too much | 13% | 16% | 16% | 13% | 13% |
| Too little | 33 | 24 | 31 | 36 | 32 |
| About right | 44 | 47 | 38 | 40 | 43 |
| Don't know | 10 | 13 | 15 | 11 | 12 |
| | | *N* = 941 | | | |

[a] Do you think the government should be spending more money, less money, or about the same amount on . . . unemployment insurance benefits.

*ABC/WP:* I'd like to ask about some specific federal government programs. For each, please tell me whether you feel spending for that program should be increased, decreased or left about the same. . . . Unemployment insurance.

| | *1981* | *1986* |
|---|---|---|
| Decrease | 25% | 18% |
| Spend about the same | 49 | 57 |
| Increase | 23 | 24 |
| No opinion | 3 | 1 |

## Government Assistance in Providing Jobs

*NYT/CBS, SRC/CPS:* The government in Washington ought to see to it that everybody who wants to work can find a job.

| | *SRC/CPS* | | | *CBS* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1956* | *1958* | *1960* | *3/76* | *4/76* | *5/76* |
| Agree | 56%[a] | 57%[a] | 58%[a] | 67% | 69% | 70% |
| Disagree | 27[b] | 26[b] | 23[b] | 27 | 26 | 24 |
| No sure | 7 | 7 | 8 | — | — | — |
| No opinion/DK/NA | 10 | 10 | 11 | 6 | 5 | 4 |

[a] Agree strongly and agree, but not very strongly.
[b] Disagree, but not very strongly, and disagree strongly.

| | CBS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *6/76* | *9/76*[c] | *10/76* | *1/78* |
| Agree | 71% | 70% | 73% | 74% |
| Disagree | 24 | 26 | 25 | 22 |
| DK/NA | 5 | 4 | 2 | 4 |

[c] The federal government should see to it that every person who wants to work has a job.

*Yankelovich:* A number of controversial proposals are being discussed these days. I'd like you to tell me for each one whether you strongly agree with it, partially agree with it, or disagree with it. Let's start with this one . . . It's up to the government to make sure that everyone has a good job and a good standard of living.

| | *3/74* | *11/74* | *5/75* | *1/76* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agree strongly | 24% | 18% | 25%[a] | 26%[a] |
| Agree partially | 37 | 34 | 30 | 35 |
| Disagree | 38[b] | 48 | 45 | 39 |

[a] "Strongly agree"
[b] "Disagree strongly"

*SRC/CPS, MOR:* Some people feel that the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. Others think the government should just let each person get ahead on his own. And, of course, other people have opinions somewhere in between. Suppose people who believe that the government should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living are at one end of this scale—at point number 1. And suppose that the people who believe that the government should let each person get ahead on his own are at the other end—at point number 7. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?

| | | *SRC/CPS* | | *MOR* | *SRC/CPS* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *9–11/72* | *11/72–2/73* | *12/74* | *11/74–1/75* |
| Government see to job | 1. | 16% | 14% | 14% | 14% |
| | 2. | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| | 3. | 9 | 12 | 7 | 10 |
| | 4. | 23 | 23 | 22 | 25 |
| | 5. | 14 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| | 6. | 8 | 11 | 11 | 10 |
| Let each get ahead on own | 7. | 22 | 20 | 27 | 20 |

| | | *MOR* | *SRC/CPS* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *6/76* | *11/76* | *11/76–1/77* | *11/78–1/79* |
| Government see to job | 1. | 15% | 14% | 7% | 9% |
| | 2. | 6 | 6 | 5 | 4 |
| | 3. | 8 | 10 | 10 | 9 |
| | 4. | 22 | 22 | 27 | 24 |
| | 5. | 17 | 13 | 18 | 19 |
| | 6. | 8 | 13 | 16 | 15 |
| Let each get ahead on own | 7. | 23 | 22 | 17 | 21 |

| | | *MOR* | *SRC/CPS* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *10–11/79* | *4/80* | *9/80* | *11/80* |
| Government see to job | 1. | 11% | 11% | 9% | 12% |
| | 2. | 4 | 6 | 6 | 8 |
| | 3. | 9 | 7 | 9 | 11 |
| | 4. | 21 | 15 | 20 | 21 |
| | 5. | 16 | 15 | 22 | 16 |
| | 6. | 13 | 22 | 19 | 19 |
| Let each get ahead on own | 7. | 26 | 24 | 16 | 14 |
| | | | $N = 834$ | $N = 638$ | |

| | | *SRC/CPS* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *11/82–1/83* | *9–11/84* | *11/84–1/85* |
| Government see to job | 1. | 11% | 12% | 10% |
| | 2. | 7 | 8 | 7 |
| | 3. | 10 | 13 | 12 |
| | 4. | 23 | 23 | 23 |
| | 5. | 18 | 19 | 23 |
| | 6. | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| Let each get ahead on own | 7. | 14 | 10 | 11 |
| | | | | $N = 879$ |

*Harris:* In general, as far as you personally are concerned, would you favor or oppose a federal program to give productive jobs to the unemployed?

| | *May 1972* | *August 1972* |
|---|---|---|
| Favor | 87% | 89% |
| Oppose | 8 | 7 |
| Not sure | 5 | 4 |

*Yankelovich:* The Republican and Democratic party platforms differ on many issues. We'd like to know how you feel. For example, do you favor or oppose . . . the passage of a full employment bill in which the government guarantees a job to everyone who wants to work?

| | *8/76* | *3/77* | *11/77* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Favor | 56% | 60% | 61% |
| Oppose | 37 | 32 | 32 |
| Not sure | 7 | 9 | 8 |

*Yankelovich:* When it comes right down to it, what do you think will be best for the country and people like yourself, the government creating jobs by putting money into things like railroads, housing and schools, or by cutting back on existing programs and trying to achieve a balanced budget?

| | *1/76* | *8/76* | *3/77* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Government creating jobs | 49% | 45% | 43% |
| Cutting back | 40 | 46 | 48 |
| Not sure | 11 | 10 | 9 |

*Gallup:* Some people say that all young men between the ages of 16 and 22 who are out of work should be required to join a youth conservation corps to carry on their education, learn a trade, and earn a little money. Do you approve or disapprove of this plan?

| | *1957*[a] | *1961*[b] | *1964* | *1968*[c] | *1971* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Approve | 64% | 59% | 73% | 71% | 66% |
| Disapprove | 28 | 34 | 21 | 25 | 27 |
| No opinion | 7 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 7 |

[a] It has been suggested that youngsters over 16 who have dropped out of school, and are not working, be sent to youth work camps, like the CCC camps several years ago to learn a trade. Does this sound like a good idea or a poor idea to you?
[b] Do you think young men who are not in school, who do not have jobs, and who are not learning a trade should be required to go to one of these camps, or not?
[c] . . . who are out of school and out of work and not now in the army . . .

*Gallup:* It is proposed that the Federal Government set up youth camps--such as the CCC camps of the 1930's--for young men who want to learn a trade and earn a little money by outdoor work. Do you think this is a good idea or a poor idea?

| | *7/61*[a] | *3/62*[a] | *8/63* | *12/76* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Good idea | 80% | 79% | 89% | 85% |
| Poor idea | 13 | 16 | 6 | 10 |
| No opinion | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 |

[a] . . . —for young men 16 to 22 years old who . . .

## Private Efforts

*Trendex:* Would you like to see private enterprise do more, do less or do about the same as they have been in connection with expanding employment?

| | *2/65* | *2/66* | *2/68* | *2/69* | *8/76* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do more | 89% | 84% | 80% | 82% | 83% |
| Do less | 1 | 1 | 1 | * | 1 |
| Do same | 10 | 14 | 17 | 16 | 13 |
| DK/NA | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |

* less than 1%

*Roper:* There is a lot of talk about what to do about unemployment in this country. Here are some suggestions that have been made. (Card shown respondent.) Would you read over those suggestions and then tell me which *one* best expresses what you think should be done about unemployment?

| | *1976* | *1982* |
|---|---|---|
| Encourage business expansion by giving business tax breaks for expanding, thus creating more jobs for people | 31% | 39% |
| Provide government jobs for the unemployed | 28 | 24 |
| Give incentives to business (tax breaks, etc.) to encourage business to hire people they wouldn't otherwise take on | 20 | 22 |
| Don't do anything different—just let things take their natural course | 8 | 7 |
| Don't know | 13 | 8 |

*Trendex:* There is much talk about whose responsibility it is to solve problems such as financing medical care, looking after the aged, employment problems and adequate housing. For each of these problems I am going to ask you which group should have the main responsibility for solving that problem—the individual and his family, local government, national government, large companies or other private groups . . . What about employment problems?

| | *2/82* | *8/82* |
|---|---|---|
| Individual and family | 18% | 18% |
| Local government | 30 | 27 |
| National government | 27 | 30 |
| Large companies | 17 | 17 |
| Other private | 4 | 4 |
| DK/NA | 4 | 3 |

*CR:* To the extent workers who lose their jobs need to be retrained to find new jobs, who should be primarily responsible for paying for this training? Should the retraining be paid for by the government, the companies that laid off the workers, the companies that are hiring new workers, or should the retraining be paid for by the workers themselves?

| | *1984* | *1986* |
|---|---|---|
| Government | 9% | 9% |
| Companies that laid off workers | 24 | 29 |
| Companies that hire new workers | 27 | 19 |
| Workers themselves | 7 | 9 |
| (Combination) | 30 | 31 |
| (Other) | — | 1 |
| (DK) | 3 | 4 |

*CR:* Do you favor or oppose laws that would require companies to keep on their payroll any employees who lose their jobs because of technological change?

| | *1983* | *1985* | *1986* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Favor | 39% | 41% | 38% |
| Oppose | 42 | 42 | 46 |
| (DK) | 19 | 17 | 16 |

*Roper:* One suggestion made that might help in putting more people to work is to let two people hold one full time job, with each working half a day and sharing the salary and benefits. Do you think this is a good idea or not?

| | *1976* | *1982* |
|---|---|---|
| Good idea | 18% | 35% |
| Not a good idea | 76 | 60 |
| Don't know | 6 | 5 |

## Workfare

*Harris:* In general, as far as you personally are concerned, would you favor or oppose making people on welfare go to work?

| | *5/72* | *8/72* |
|---|---|---|
| Favor | 88% | 89% |
| Oppose | 6 | 6 |
| Not sure | 6 | 5 |

*NBC:* Do you think that those people who receive welfare and are capable of working should be required to work at public jobs in order to receive their checks?

| | *8/77* |
|---|---|
| Yes | 93% |
| No | 6 |
| Not sure | 6 |

*Roper:* Welfare recipients who are capable of holding only low paying jobs have ittle incentive to find jobs, for they lose their welfare benefits if they are employed. It has been proposed to change the system to provide job incentive. If a welfare recipient got a job, his welfare benefits would only go down one dollar for every two dollars he earned. Would you favor or oppose such a change in the welfare system?

| | *3/76* | *11/77* |
|---|---|---|
| Favor change | 69% | 74% |
| Oppose change | 19 | 19 |
| DK/No answer | 11 | 7 |

*Gallup:* It has been proposed that all able-bodied mothers of children between 6 and 13 who are on welfare be required to register with state employment offices and to take any *full-time* work available. Would you favor or oppose such a plan?

| | *5/79* |
|---|---|
| Favor | 79% |
| Oppose | 17 |
| No opinion | 4 |

*Gallup:* It has been proposed that all able-bodied mothers of children between 6 and 13 who are on welfare be required to register with state employment offices and to take any *part-time* work available. Would you favor or oppose such a plan?

| | *5/79* |
|---|---|
| Favor | 68% |
| Oppose | 28 |
| No opinion | 4 |

*Gallup:* Some states have laws requiring people on welfare who have completed job search and training programs and still can't find jobs, to work at public service or nonprofit jobs without additional pay. Would you like to see such a law in your state, or not?

| | *12/85* |
|---|---|
| Favor | 69% |
| Oppose | 25 |
| No opinion | 6 |

*ABC/WP:* Would you favor or oppose legislation that requires able-bodied people on public assistance to work at any minimum-wage job in return for their benefits?

| | *12/85* |
|---|---|
| Favor | 77% |
| Oppose | 18 |
| DK/No opinion | 5 |

*ABC/WP:* Would you favor or oppose legislation that requires able-bodied people on public assistance to undergo job training in return for their benefits?

| | *12/85* |
|---|---|
| Favor | 89% |
| Oppose | 8 |
| DK/No opinion | 3 |

## Day Care and Employment

*Harris, Gallup:* Do you favor or oppose the idea of setting up many more day-care centers where working mothers could leave their children during the day?

| | *Gallup* | *Harris* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *4/69*[a] | *8/70* | *10/75* |
| Favor | 64% | 56% | 67% |
| Oppose | 30 | 31 | 25 |
| Not sure | 6 | 13 | 8 |

[a] Day-care centers for very young children are being set up so that mothers in poor areas can take jobs and so that children can get early educational training. How do you feel about this—would you favor or oppose having the Federal government provide funds to set up these centers in most communities?

*CR:* Some companies today are making day-care facilities available to their employees. Do you think companies should share the responsibility of providing day care, or is it primarily up to the parents?

| | *Working Women* | | *Overall* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *1978* | *1986* | *1986* |
| Companies should share | 40% | 59% | 55% |
| Parents' responsibility | 46 | 37 | 39 |
| (DK) | 15 | 4 | 6 |
| | ($N \approx 300$) | ($N = 346$) | |

*CR:* Would you agree or disagree: Companies should make day-care facilities available to their employees as part of their benefits.

| | *Working Women* | | *Overall* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *1978* | *1986* | *1986* |
| Agree | 46% | 63% | 60% |
| Disagree | 34 | 27 | 30 |
| (DK) | 20 | 10 | 10 |
| | ($N \simeq 300$) | ($N = 346$) | |

*ABC/WP:* I'd like to ask about some specific federal government programs. For each, please tell me whether you feel spending for that program should be increased, decreased or left about the same. . . . Day care program for children of working parents.

| | *1981* | *1986* |
|---|---|---|
| Decrease | 15% | 11% |
| Spend about the same | 46 | 44 |
| Increase | 38 | 44 |
| No opinion | 1 | 1 |

*Gallup:* A proposal has been made to make child-care centers available for all preschool children as part of the public school system. This program would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?

| | *1976* | *1981* | *1985* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Favor | 46% | 46% | 43% |
| Oppose | 49 | 47 | 45 |
| Don't know | 5 | 7 | 12 |

*CR:* Congress is now considering a bill, often called the "parental leave" bill, that would require employers with five or more workers to offer both mothers and fathers an unpaid leave of up to 18 weeks after a birth or adoption. The legislation would require employers to give parents their former jobs or comparable ones when they returned to work. The bill would also allow parents time off to care for a seriously ill child. Do you think requiring employers to provide unpaid parental leave for employees is a good idea or a bad idea?

| | *1986* |
|---|---|
| Good idea | 63% |
| Bad idea | 25 |
| (DK) | 12 |

*CR:* What about paid parental leave: Do you think it would be a good idea or a bad idea to enact a law that would require employers to give both mothers and fathers 3 months of leave at 75% pay following a birth or adoption?

| | *1986* |
|---|---|
| Good idea | 38% |
| Bad idea | 50 |
| (DK) | 13 |

# NOTE

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